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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT Monday, May 8, 1933.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "Using Another Spring Garden Food." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A.

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Opinions often differ, even about asparagus. Some people think asparagus one of our most delicious vegetables. Others don't like it. What's the reason for this difference in point of view? I'll make a guess. It's the way the asparagus is prepared that makes the likes and dislikes. Sometimes asparagus comes on the table cooked so it's tender yet not mushy, so it's a pleasant clear green in color, and so it's full of good flavor. Then again it appears mushy and broken at the tip yet tough at the stem end, and dull brownish green in color with little or no flavor. Suit yourself as to which kind of asparagus will appeal to the appetites in your family. If you're wise and thrifty, you'll believe in saving the good flavor, color and texture as well as the food value in asparagus. Here is one of spring's best offerings in the food line. Here's a green vegetable rich in minerals and vitamins as well as in good flavor. Why not make the most of it?

Before I mention the cooking process, I'd like to offer a few hints about keeping asparagus after you bring it in from your garden or from the market, and about washing and trimming it.

Of course, any garden product is better if you cook it right from the garden. But freshness is a special requirement for asparagus, because this vegetable spoils so easily when it is moist. The tender tips soon get slimy if you wash them and then let them stand around a little too long, especially in a warm place. But you can keep asparagus satisfactorily a day or two, if you take proper care of it. Wash and trim the stalks. Then put them in a tightly covered dish in the refrigerator until time to cook them. Or, stand them up in a wide jar with the stem ends in a little water and the tops which stick out of the jar carefully covered with a damp towel.

Thorough washing is very important. Asparagus is not improved by sand. So remove the scales up and down the sides of the stalk. Sand is likely to hide under those scales. Now about trimming. Of course, you have noticed that asparagus is usually very tender at the tip yet firm or even tough at the thick stem end. Of course, these two ends need different lengths of time for cooking. The tender asparagus tips require a very short cooking while the stem ends take longer to cook tender. What to do about that? The specialists advise cutting off the tough ends and using them for another purpose. Test the stalk of asparagus by "sticking" it a little with a knife or fork until you find where the tender part ends and the tough part begins. Then cut off the stalk right at this point.

Of course, the asparagus stalks in a bunch will differ as to the length of the tender section. You can use the tough ends for seasoning cream soup. The tender tips you can serve in any one of a number of ways. You can cook the tops whole. Or you can cut them into one or two-inch lengths and cook them in milk. Did you ever try cooking green vegetables in milk instead of water? This method helps preserve the green color and the flavor and makes the asparagus extra delicious. Of course, you don't boil the asparagus in the milk. You simmer it until just tender. Then you add seasoning, butter and a little flour-thickening. If you cook the stalks whole, first sort them for size. The thick stalks you can put in the kettle first. Later you can put in the thin stalks. In this way, both sizes will be done at once. Or you can cook the thicks and the thins separately. But always cook until just tender -- just long enough, never too much. And always leave the lid off the kettle when you're cooking asparagus or any other green vegetable. Drain and serve at once, as soon as the asparagus is tender.

Now about some of the many different ways to serve asparagus, once you have it properly cooked. You can serve it just plain boiled with melted butter, salt and pepper for seasoning. That's an easy and very common way. Or you can serve asparagus with white sauce or with cream sauce, in case you have some extra cream. You can serve it with cheese sauce, or with grated sharp cheese sprinkled over white sauce. Many people like asparagus either buttered or creamed and served on toast. For special occasions serve it on a finger roll instead of toast. Cut the long finger rolls in half. Scoop out the centers. Toast the shells. Then fill them with piping hot buttered stalks.

Of course, we mustn't forget to mention salad when we're talking about ways to use asparagus. You can make delicious salad of either canned or fresh asparagus, just by laying some stalks on crisp lettuce, and decorating them with a strip of red pimiento or of green pepper, with sliced tomato, a bit of onion, or some deviled eggs. For this simple salad French dressing is very nice. Another good-looking and good tasting asparagus salad is tomato stuffed with cooked asparagus tips, cut in short lengths, and dressed with heavy mayonnaise.

Our Monday economy menu features asparagus. Here's the menu: Cold sliced beef tongue; Fried potatoes; Asparagus buttered or simmered in milk; Whole wheat bread or biscuit and butter; and for dessert, Boston cream pie.

Now once more, that inexpensive menu: Cold sliced beef tongue; Fried potatoes; Asparagus buttered or simmered in milk; Whole wheat bread or biscuit and butter; and for dessert, Boston cream pie.

Tomorrow I'm going to tell you about some interesting community canning kitchens and suggest equipment for such a canning center, in case you're considering one in your neighborhood.

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